



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARMERS MARKET "BOOT CAMPS" COMING THIS MONTH

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- Tennessee farmers, farmers market managers, vendors and board members can enlist in one of several new "boot camps" scheduled across the state March 26-28. The farmers market boot camps will focus on merchandising and effective displays, food safety issues and regulations, good agricultural practices, and sales tax exemptions and requirements.

The boot camps will be conducted by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and UT Extension.

"When you finish this 'boot camp,' you'll be prepared to have a successful experience with your farmers market when this year's produce season starts," says Pamela Bartholomew, agritourism coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. "Participants will receive consistent, accurate and up to date information, straight from the experts."

"As growers and makers of food that goes directly to the people who eat those foods, there's a big responsibility to follow all the practices necessary to keep public confidence high in farm direct products."

"We also want farmers markets to be as attractive, functional, accessible and safe as possible," says Bartholomew. "We hope the state's farmers market community take this opportunity to attend one of the four places around the state where the events will be offered."

The programs are free of charge, but pre-registration is required, and must be made five days prior to the scheduled session. Registrations can be made by phone or email. Emailed registrations should be sent to kamartinez@utk.edu and must include participant names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and total number planning to attend. To register by phone, call 931-486-2777. Sessions will be canceled if an ample number of pre-registrations are not secured.

A meal will be provided free of charge as part of the event.

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The first boot camp will be held Monday, March 26, from noon until 4:30 p.m. in Morristown. On Tuesday, March 27, the boot camp is scheduled for 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. in Athens. Manchester will host the camp later the same day, March 27, from 4 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. The final farmers market event will take place in Jackson on Wednesday, March 28, 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

“Farmers markets are an increasingly important economic link to Tennessee’s rural communities,” says Bartholomew, “with more than 100 farmers markets across the state. Farmers take their products straight to the customer, and in return get to take the profit back home to their farms and communities. It’s a wonderful marketing opportunity, with nutritional, social and economic benefits for everyone involved.”

For a complete listing of Tennessee farmers markets, visit the TDA Market Development Web site at www.picktnproducts.org.

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